

My legislation would increase this amount from \$60,000 to \$81,000 to make it comparable to the maximum loan amount available to the public. After giving so much to their nation, veterans deserve the same opportunities for home ownership given to every American.

HONORING ERIC ALVA

HON. CHARLES A. GONZALEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 10, 2003

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, I come before you today to pay tribute to Staff Sergeant Eric Alva, a resident of my district in San Antonio. I stand here with both a great sense of pride for S.Sgt. Alva's bravery and with a heavy heart for the sacrifice he ultimately made for our country. Mr. Speaker, S.Sgt. Alva was recently injured by a landmine explosion while on duty in Iraq. As a result, S.Sgt. Alva lost his lower right leg. There is no doubt that S.Sgt. Alva has experienced a tremendous loss, but through his service he has gained respect and gratitude from myself and his fellow Americans.

The ancient historian Herodotus once said "Great deeds are usually wrought at great risks". S.Sgt. Alva accepted this great risk when he chose to wear the uniform of the United States Marines. He accepted this risk fearlessly, with pride and conviction. Although his pledge to serve and to defend this nation is a great deed alone, the loss he has suffered in service merits particular distinction. It is because of the selfless actions of men and women like S.Sgt. Alva that American freedom and democracy endures.

Although this war has brought sorrow and suffering to some in our nation's armed forces and to their loved ones, their sacrifice serves as a symbol of the American spirit. Honoring those who are injured and killed in battle who stand up bravely to fulfil their duty is a fitting testimony to the values this country was founded upon.

In recognition of S.Sgt. Alva and those like him who are serving their country during this time of war, I implore the world, that in their honor, we achieve the one goal we are all fighting for: Peace.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING REFORM OF INTER- NAL REVENUE CODE

SPEECH OF

HON. PETER A. DeFAZIO

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 9, 2003

Mr. DeFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I am voting yes on H. Con. Res. 141, a hortative resolution with no legally-binding impact, but which has a lot of predictable political rhetoric about the need to reform the enormously complex and loophole-ridden federal tax code.

I am voting yes because the "whereas" clauses in the resolution are by and large inoffensive, if deliberately vague about the true intention behind the rhetoric, which is to fundamentally reform the U.S. tax code in a way

that eases the tax burden on the rich and corporations and raises the burden on middle and lower-income Americans.

I agree that the federal tax code is too complex. Billions are spent trying to comply with its provisions. Though, I would also point out that the wealthiest Americans and most profitable corporations also spend billions in an effort to avoid their fair share of the federal tax burden.

The resolution is also correct to say the tax code is full of loopholes and special interest exemptions. Though, I would point out that these loopholes and exemptions, which largely benefit the most powerful in our society, did not get into the tax code by accident or osmosis. They were put there by Members of Congress at the behest of wealthy campaign contributors.

Although I am voting yes, I want to go on the record in opposition to the second "resolved" clause of the resolution, which in my opinion is too deferential to the tax reform concepts laid out in the February 2003 Economic Report of the President.

The President's report lays out its utopian vision of reduced, or ideally zero, taxes on corporations, reduced taxes on capital, and increased taxes on consumption and wages, which would hurt middle and lower-income Americans.

Mr. Speaker, if the U.S. tax code is going to be overhauled, I believe it should be made more progressive than it is today. That would mean eliminating special interest loopholes for corporations and wealthy Americans. Cracking down on tax dodging by powerful individuals and businesses. Doing so would allow us to relieve some of the tax burden on middle and lower-income Americans. Further, any overhaul of the federal tax code must not add to the crushing burden of debt we are leaving to the next generation.

Like Adam Smith, author of the pro-capitalism tome "The Wealth of Nations," I believe in progressive taxation. Adam Smith wrote, "The subjects of every state ought to contribute toward the support of the government, as nearly as possible, in proportion to their respective abilities; that is, in proportion to the revenue which they respectively enjoy under the protection of the state ... [As Henry Home (Lord Kames) has written, a goal of taxation should be to] 'remedy inequality of riches as much as possible, by relieving the poor and burdening the rich.'"

PROTECTION OF LAWFUL COMMERCE IN ARMS ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 9, 2003

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill—(H.R. 1036) to prohibit civil liability actions from being brought or continued against manufacturers, distributors, dealers, or importers of firearms or ammunition for damages resulting from the misuse of their products by others:

Mr. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 1036, the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act. This bill

unfairly grants the gun industry immunity and takes away an individual's or state's ability to hold gun manufacturers, gun dealers, and gun trade associations accountable to negligence and product liability standards that every other industry is subject to.

The bill perpetuates the gun industry's disregard for public safety and holds up their "see-no-evil, hear-no-evil, speak-no-evil" approach to gun manufacturing and distribution. The gun industry should be held accountable to its consumers and victims in the same way that every other industry is. As it is, guns are one of the few consumer products that are exempt from health and safety regulations.

Furthermore, this bill would void a number of pending cases around the country which seek to hold the gun industry accountable for its actions. Specifically, if passed into law, this bill would nullify a case currently moving through the Illinois Supreme Court. The case was brought against a number of gun manufacturers, gun distributors, and gun dealers by the City of Chicago and Cook County who allege that these entities have created a public nuisance by making guns available to juveniles in the Chicago area. No one can dispute that kids have access to guns. A nationwide survey conducted by the Illinois based Teenage Research Unlimited found that 41 percent of teenagers surveyed reported that they could get a handgun if they really wanted to. Furthermore, the Chicago Police Department reported that, in 1999, 165 offenders under the age of 21 were charged with murders involving a firearm.

One death by a handgun is too many. But when 666 people are murdered in one year in just one city, as was the case in Chicago in 2001, we must wake up to reality and demand that something be done. Unfortunately, this bill takes us backwards and gives immunity to the very industry that has the power to regulate the manufacturing and distribution of its products.

I am disappointed that this bill is on the House floor today, and I urge my colleagues to vote "no" on H.R. 1036.

AN HISTORIC DAY

HON. DOUG BEREUTER

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 10, 2003

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, this Member wishes to commend to his colleagues the April 10, 2003, editorial from the Lincoln Journal Star, entitled "Cheers for Toppling of Saddam." Indeed, the editorial captures the enthusiastic spirit of the Iraqi people as American troops liberated them from the horrific, repressive regime of Saddam Hussein.

CHEERS FOR TOPPLING OF SADDAM

On Wednesday the war in Iraq reached a historic 'tipping point,' as Brig. Gen Vince Brooks termed it, symbolized by the toppling of a 40-foot statue of Saddam Hussein in a main square of Baghdad.

Hundreds of Iraqis, especially the Shiite Muslim majority that suffered under Saddam's predominantly Sunni Muslim government, celebrated with cheers, exchanging high fives with U.S. Marines.

A group of Iraqis dragged the head of the Saddam statue through the streets. Others battered it with sticks and shoes.